



Your Entry into Arts & Entertainment

July 13/14, 2005

TICKET

Monthly songwriting workshops at Ambler's Slot One studio help fledgling artists take the next step towards production

By Sarina Rosenberg
Student Intern

The songwriting process continues long after an artist creates lyrics and a tune. A song evolves during the hundreds of hours spent at the recording studio perfecting every element, according to Ambler recording artist Rick Denzien.

"It's hundreds and hundreds of hours," said Denzien, who owns Slot One Productions, a studio located at 265 N. Main St. in Ambler, where at least 200 artists have recorded since 1990.

Denzien began holding monthly workshops in January

that give amateur songwriters valuable experience refining their music at a professional studio. He will host the next songwriters' workshop on July 28.

Photographs and memorabilia from artists — such as Bloodhound Gang and Anton Fig, a regular drummer for Paul Shafer's CBS Orchestra — who have worked at the studio color the padded walls of Slot

One. Denzien, who stands well over six feet, nearly grazed the low basement ceilings with his blonde hair as he maneuvered around the clutter of guitars, microphones and speakers on his way to the small production room. He sat on a short, rolling chair, legs crossed, as he discussed the

IF YOU GO

Slot One Studio,

265 N. Main St., Ambler,
conducts

Songwriter Workshops

every month, 7:30 – 11 p.m.

Cost: \$25, except free for members of Philadelphia Songwriter Alliance or Nashville Songwriters Association International.
Info: (215) 643-1313 or www.slot-1.com.

workshop.

"We deal with singers, songwriters and performers who aren't big-time yet but have the potential to be there," said Denzien, who said his song "Desperation" was the most downloaded song on the Internet between 1998 and 2003. "The songwriter workshop is all about getting their songs down so they can take the next step," he said.

A Songwriter Workshop at Slot One Studio in June 2005.



Workshops typically run from 7 to 11 p.m. Denzien provides instruments for the recording but many participants bring their own guitars. Members of the Nashville Songwriters Association International and the Philadelphia Songwriter Alliance attend the

workshop for free. The workshop costs \$25 for unaffiliated songwriters.

Slot One also began holding semi-annual vocal workshops that focus on performance techniques.

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Rick Denzien really into the production equipment at the Slot One Studio.



Slot One offers songwriters opportunities to learn about producing music

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Guest artist Lisa Popeil worked with 17 aspiring singers of all ages at the first workshop on June 5. Denzien said he plans to host the next singer workshop in the fall. The singers' workshop costs \$25 and is free for PSA and NSAI members.

For more information about the songwriter or vocal workshops, call Slot One

Productions at (215) 643-1313.

Denzien said he found inspiration for the songwriter workshop through his own experience as a budding artist in Rochester, N.Y. He met periodically with a group of songwriters to critique and improve his music, but he soon learned the importance of technical recording skills in launching his career. "I would write these songs and I wouldn't

know what to do with them next," he said.

The songwriters rented space in a studio to experiment with the recording process. "I was able to get a lot of hands-on experience in that process," said Denzien as he adjusted a piece of equipment. "I wanted to revive the idea and bring it back," he said.

The songwriter workshops



Rick Denzien and his partner, Debra Lee.

target artists who already write music. Each participant brings an original song he or she would like to record, and Denzien pulls from a hat one song to work with. After the songwriter performs the song, the rest of the workshop focuses

on fine-tuning and recording it. "We teach you how to make the song better," said Denzien.

"My job is to make the song more potent, to take out all the air," he said. Denzien said he creates a "musical map" of the song's lyrics and notes. After he tightens the structure of the song, the group creates a songwriter demo ready to present to a recording label. "The demo takes you to the next level," Denzien said.

Denzien transformed a gospel song called "Hey Jesus" by Joanne Jiruska at the latest workshop on June 30. Slot One's Web site, www.slot-1.com, features Jiruska's simple guitar version of the song and the improved demo the group created at the workshop in which Denzien added vocal backup, drums and a bass track to the song.

Denzien said songwriters sometimes feel uncomfortable changing the structure or sound of their song. "It's sort of an emotional rollercoaster for the songwriter," said Denzien. "A lot of these people have no idea what they're in for."

"I had been writing my own music for a couple of years, but I had never done professional recording studio," said songwriter Robert Mecklenburger of Princeton Junction, N.J. "The idea of this workshop was perfect for me," he said. "I saw the whole process of developing a song."

Mecklenburger, who's been playing guitar for over 40 years and recently began writing, said he first heard about Denzien's workshop through the Philadelphia Songwriters Alliance. After he attended the January workshop, Mecklenburger began working with Denzien on his own album. "He acts for a songwriter the way an editor of a magazine might work with a writer," said Mecklenburger.

"Songs go through an evolution," said Denzien, as he played a recording from a recent workshop. "The whole point of it is that when you're recording your song, you have to be open to this process of editing and re-editing that will begin launching your career," he said.